

# REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: UNO and its various Agencies

Students visit the Hall of Names, at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Jerusalem on January 26, 2022, on the eve of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. | Photo Credit: [AFP](#)

Marked by the United Nations each year on the 27th of January, International Holocaust Remembrance Day provides an opportunity to recount the atrocities of the Holocaust that resulted in the death of an estimated 6 million Jews. The day marks the anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi German concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in January 1945. The aphorism for Holocaust remembrance remains unchanged: Never Again. A turning point in history, the Holocaust is one of the most visible acts of violence and discrimination. Yet, lessons of the past seem to fade in the mists of time. Are those who do not remember the past condemned to repeat it?

As the Holocaust recedes in time, the forces of antisemitism, racial and religious intolerance, and discrimination and hate speech pose new challenges to global civilisational values, thereby running the risk of repetition of the crimes of the past. Holocaust ignorance, distortion and denial are growing at an alarming rate. The Anti-Defamation League Global 100, an index on antisemitism, found that antisemitic sentiments are disturbingly pervasive, with more than a quarter of the people surveyed, an estimated 1.09 billion people, harbouring antisemitic attitudes around the world. Across Asia, only 23% of persons surveyed had heard of the Holocaust and believe the historical account. Data from North America and Europe show that younger people are less likely to be aware of the historical accounts of the Holocaust, with less than half of those surveyed under the age of 35 having ever heard of the Holocaust. Considering India's youthful demography, these statistics are important. The youth proved to be particularly vulnerable to the techniques employed by extremists to spread hateful and racist ideologies, which underscores the importance of empowering the youth with the knowledge, capacities, and agency to reject hate.

Engaging the youth with the painful history of the Holocaust and the ethical and moral issues it highlights has contemporary relevance as a tool to help fight hatred and prompt discussion of the societal contexts that enable exclusionary policies to divide communities. With an ever more globalised young generation, capitalising on the power of education, communication and connectivity is important as they are effective tools to galvanise people into action.

India's growing global influence and efforts towards digitisation provide further impetus to expand youth networks so that young people across the world can connect, share experiences, and negate extremist mindsets, ultimately strengthening efforts to disavow violence and discrimination. However, this needs to be carefully monitored as the lack of critical skills to filter out or navigate misinformation or disinformation on social media can leave the youth vulnerable to hate speech online. According to a publication by the Center for Countering Digital Hatred, antisemitism can be found on all social media platforms. The situation is worse in languages other than English, as social media companies including Facebook and YouTube lack global content moderation teams. This is important to note especially in the Indian context, as the youth make up a greater portion of the Internet user base.

Malicious words have the power to spark a wildfire, for it is words that started the Holocaust. Therefore, to prevent Indian youth from disseminating various forms of hate speech, both online and offline, we must educate them about the Holocaust and antisemitism today to deepen

reflection about contemporary issues that affect societies around the world, such as the power of extremist ideologies, propaganda, the abuse of official power, and group-targeted hate and violence.

India's vision to create inclusive and equitable education that includes more detailed knowledge of various cultures, religions, languages, and gender identities to develop respect for diversity through the National Educational Policy 2020 already creates a fertile ground for working on Holocaust education programmes. To further this vision and strengthen the resilience of Indian society against antisemitic discourses, the Embassies of Israel and Germany, with the support of UNESCO, are organising a workshop on antisemitism for policymakers, school principals and educators this February. Using existing training resources, experts from UNESCO, Israel and Germany will equip educators with the knowledge and approaches needed to use the history of the Holocaust to make 'Never Again' an actionable promise emanating from our classrooms.

With the community of Holocaust survivors dwindling, we need the youth to take forward the lessons of the past. It is imperative that they are empowered with knowledge to combat myths and falsehoods, and to be able to withstand influence from violent extremism and hate speech.

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The Republic Day this year is a time when citizens of India must rededicate themselves to fulfilling their duties

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